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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2005/1.

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We, international NGOs who are members of the NGO Committee on Social Development and committed through direct service, research and advocacy to global action related to the Development of Africa, welcome this opportunity to review the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. We have noted that the Declaration and the Plan for Action adopted at Copenhagen (1995) as well as the Implementation Document adopted at Copenhagen +5 (Geneva 2000) repeatedly mention Africa, where 34 of the 50 countries classified by the United Nations as least developed countries (LTDs) and 32 of the 38 nations eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries treatment (HIPCs) are located, as requiring **urgent international, regional and national action** (Part A of the Declaration, Point 7 of the Commitments, Chapter 5 on Follow Up and in particular on the Mobilization of Financial Resources(1995); Commitment 7 and Mobilization of Financial Resources, WSSD+5 (2000)). The human and social costs of insufficient action to bolster the African situation, further worsened by HIV/AIDS, are tremendous!

In this light, we strongly urge:

(1) **Rapid international action on significant debt relief, including cancellation, for the poorest countries of Africa**. The Secretary General has highlighted in his recent report on the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) that increasingly, most of the aid flows to Africa are canceled out by debt service payments (Secretary General's "New Partnership for Africa's Development: second consolidated report on progress implementation and international support", 4 August 2004,A/59/206). Significant debt relief is an essential component of economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa, and creates a serious blockage to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal Number 1 ("The Burdens of Debt", Letter to the Editor of the New York Times by Under Secretary General Ibrahim Gambari Oct. 2, 2004).

(2) **Greater coherence by Africa's development partners to trade, aid as well as debt policies combined with increased aid towards needed development policies in the region**. Continued Sustained Official Development Assistance (ODAs) should be bolstered but attention should be given not to transfer aid into debt, as "deeper debt reduction will require additional financing" and the danger "is a zero-sum game of transferring of aid resources into debt relief ("Africa's burden of debt is still far too heavy", Financial Times, September 22, 2004 by Sir Kevin Watkins; Secretary General's "New Partnership for Africa's Development: second consolidated report on progress implementation and international support", 4 August 2004,A/59/206).

The aim of additional funding should be very specifically to bolster some of the transformative changes advocated by African experts for the African Region, with the intent to place the continent on a path of **regional agricultural self-sufficiency and of manufacturing for export**.

(3) In order to achieve this double goal we urge, in the light of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAAPD), a cornerstone of NEPAD (2001), the following actions:

(a) **Strong support to science and technology institutes across the African continent able to carefully survey the African agricultural terrain, improve existing agricultural production and develop new alternative crops, all three factors directly leading to a more intensive and streamlined agricultural production and to regional agricultural self-sufficiency.** The potential success of the new Marika rice developed by WADA in West Africa with Japanese funding and the Pan-African Cassava Initiative all point the way for more international efforts in those areas.

(b) **Making fertilizer more accessible as an integral part of the intensification of agricultural production.**

(c) **Improving and supporting agricultural extension services** that will bring to the farmers the knowledge of new practices and crops and the information needed for improved integration of agricultural production across the continent.

(d) **Rapidly improving the infrastructure of roads, rails and other transportation across the continent**, needed for water transportation in the case of emergencies and for regional trade.

(e) **Supporting key institutions that would regulate food standards across and within countries, thus facilitating regional trade and food exchanges.**

These key elements of the New African Partnership, if satisfied, will bring Africa closer to the realization of the Millennium Development Goal Number 1, initiate an authentic African agricultural revolution, and facilitate the development of manufacturing for export over the long run.

These actions are however ABSOLUTELY URGENT.

This statement is endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

Dominican Leadership Conference
Elizabeth Seton Federation
International Association of Charities
International Association of Schools of Social Work
International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences
Lutheran World Federation

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries
VIVAT International